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Governors Ehrlich and Warner Call for National Effort to Restore Chesapeake Bay

ANNAPOLIS -- Maryland Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr. and Virginia Governor Mark R. Warner today announced the launch of an effort to make the clean-up of the Chesapeake Bay a new national priority. The announcement was made at the Chesapeake Bay Executive Council's annual meeting at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, held at the site where the first Chesapeake Bay agreement was signed 20 years ago. The Chesapeake Executive Council is comprised of the leadership of Maryland, Virginia, the District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the Chesapeake Bay Commission.

"Finally, we have the political will in the Bay watershed states to fight for a national Chesapeake Bay restoration effort. I look forward to collaborating with Governor Warner, President Bush, and my former colleagues in Congress to promote a responsible, national stewardship of the Chesapeake Bay," Governor Ehrlich said. "Here in Maryland, I will continue working with legislators, farmers, watermen, and conservationists to restore the oyster population, increase Bay grasses, and reduce harmful nutrients entering the Bay."

Governor Ehrlich will leverage his relationships in Washington, D.C. to secure federal support for the Chesapeake Bay. As a Member of Congress in 2001, Ehrlich co-authored legislation authorizing \$660 million to upgrade Bay-area wastewater treatment plants, which are the primary nitrogen pollutants of the Chesapeake Bay.

"It is appropriate that the Bay states join together in this collective effort to make the Chesapeake Bay a national priority," said Governor Warner. "Our federal government is the financial patron of the world's largest ecosystem restoration effort in the Florida Everglades. The Chesapeake Bay is a national treasure, and is also worthy of such extensive federal support."

Governor Ehrlich and Governor Warner are initiating plans to take the Chesapeake Bay effort to a national level and create a task force of all affected states and the District, to

develop a plan to fully engage each congressional delegation, the President, state and local agencies, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and other conservation groups to make restoration of the Bay a national priority. The Chesapeake Bay program estimates the cost of restoration at more than \$11.5 billion over the next ten years.

The six-partner Chesapeake Executive Council also announced the formation of a Chesapeake Bay Watershed Blue Ribbon Panel to consider funding sources at a federal, state, and local level. The Panel will provide the Executive Council with a detailed report no later than October 2004.

Governor Ehrlich also highlighted three priorities to restore the Bay in Maryland: restoring the oyster population, increasing Bay grasses, and reducing nutrients entering the Bay. With oysters, Maryland is working with the EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers to accelerate the environmental impact study on introducing the Pacific coast strain of the Asian oyster into the Bay. The oyster will not only return the necessary filtration function to the Bay but will revive the nearly-dead oyster industry.

With Bay grasses, Maryland will initiate a major propagation and planting program to meet the Chesapeake 2000 goal of 185,000 acres by the year 2010. With regard to nutrient reduction, Maryland is working to apply nutrient reduction technology on sewage treatment plants to achieve the water quality standards consistent with the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement.

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